

Reinterpreting intercultural dialogue for sustainability in the Anthropocene era

Thor-André Skrefsrud

Received: 25 March 2025 | Accepted: 9 April 2025 | Published: 15 April 2025

1. Introduction
 2. Two defining narratives of the 21st century – Contextual background
 3. Intercultural dialogue and anthropocentrism
 4. Rethinking intercultural dialogue through an Anthropocene lens
 5. Extending the narrative of the Anthropocene
 6. Rethinking the Anthropocene through an intercultural dialogue lens
 7. Concluding remarks
-

Keywords: intercultural dialogue; sustainability; Anthropocene; anthropocentrism; power relations.

Abstract. *This article explores the concept of intercultural dialogue in an era shaped by significant human impact on the planet, commonly framed as the ‘Anthropocene’. Addressing concerns that intercultural dialogue may be limited to human-centered interactions, the article argues that the Anthropocene narrative offers a critical and imaginative reassessment of intercultural dialogue, extending its scope beyond traditional anthropocentric perspectives. Furthermore, the article suggests that critically rethinking intercultural dialogue within the context of the Anthropocene can, in turn,*

lead to a more nuanced understanding of the Anthropocene narrative itself. Central to this argument is the need for a critical analysis within the Anthropocene discourse, highlighting how a small group of nations disproportionately contributes to climate change while the world's most vulnerable communities bear the consequences. By situating intercultural dialogue within an ecological context, the article underscores its potential to challenge dominant narratives, amplify marginalized voices, and thus foster more just and sustainable ways of coexisting. Ultimately, the article calls for a deeper recognition of the interconnectedness of human and non-human life, ensuring that environmental awareness becomes a central component of intercultural communication and collaboration.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I explore the opportunities for understanding intercultural dialogue in a way that goes beyond its traditional anthropocentric approach. More specifically, I draw attention to how the 'Anthropocene' narrative disrupts the conventional notion of intercultural dialogue and discuss the potential for reimagining such a concept within a context where human activities are having increasingly detrimental impacts on the world (Biswas Mellamphy & Vangeest, 2024; Malm & Hornborg, 2014; Zalasiewicz et al., 2009). At the same time, I analyse how a wider understanding of intercultural dialogue can contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of the Anthropocene narrative itself, underlining the necessity to incorporate perspectives on structural injustice and global power structures. The research question for this paper is as follows: *How can a reciprocal critique of intercultural dialogue and the Anthropocene narrative foster sustainable intercultural relations in an era of global environmental change?*

The article is structured as follows: First, I provide a contextual background for the discussion by drawing attention to two key initiatives – the European Union's launch of *The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue* in 2008, and, a few months later, the Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society's proposal of the term *Anthropocene*. Next, I continue by formulating a central challenge for understanding intercultural dialogue in the Anthropocene: the need to critically examine how anthropocentrism shapes and structures intercultural encounters. I

then explore how the Anthropocene can serve as a productive concept for a critical and constructive rethinking of intercultural dialogue, incorporating environmental awareness into contemporary discussions on intercultural interactions. Following this, I consider how an expanded concept of intercultural dialogue – one that includes marginalized voices from both nature and culture – can contribute to critical research seeking a deeper understanding of the Anthropocene. I conclude the article by reflecting on the importance of broadening the discussion of the Anthropocene beyond the natural sciences, emphasizing that integrating intercultural dialogue into this narrative enriches the discourse and underscores the need to reconnect humanity with the broader biosphere.

2. Two defining narratives of the 21st century – Contextual background

In January 2008, in Ljubljana in Slovenia, the European Parliament and the member states of the European Union (EU) launched ‘The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ (The European Union, 2008). Initiated as an awareness campaign to encourage and enhance debate and reflection in and between EU countries, the year resembled an almost 40-year tradition where the European Commission proposes a specific thematic issue which is then adopted by the Parliament and the EU member governments. The background and context for this particular program was the successive enlargement of the EU and the increasing globalization and internationalization that many of the European countries had experienced in recent years. For that reason, the main aim of the year was “to raise the profile of intercultural dialogue, which is essential for creating respect for cultural diversity, improving coexistence in today’s diverse societies and encouraging active European citizenship” (The European Union, 2008, p. 2). Through such a priority, the EU wanted to recognize the advantages of cultural diversity and to emphasize the crucial need for handling cultural differences between human beings in a way that leads to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

A month later, in February 2008, members of the Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society, an interdisciplinary group of geoengineers and chemists, came together in London to publish a short but groundbreaking paper that was to create a massive debate in the years to come. In the paper entitled “Are we living in the Anthropocene?” the authors suggested that “earth has endured changes sufficient to leave a global stratigraphic signature distinct from that of the Holocene” (Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008, p. 4). Re-introducing the term

‘Anthropocene’, the authors proposed a shift from the current geologic epoch, the Holocene, to a new epoch in the history of the world. While the Holocene began around 12.000 years ago after the last major ice age, the Anthropocene describes the most recent period in earth’s history when human activity started to have a dominant influence on the planet’s climate and ecosystems (Liana & Fair, 2019). As noted by the Stratigraphy Commission, evidence of “the global environmental effects of increased human population and economic development” (Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008, p. 4) is now overwhelming, including a significant rise in average global temperatures, increasing sea level, a growing volume of waste, and an accelerated loss of biodiversity due to extinctions of plants and animals. Hence, according to the authors, recognizing the shift from the Holocene to the Anthropocene marks a crucial step towards fostering greater ecological awareness regarding how human actions impact environments and global lifeforms (Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008).

When first considered together, the European Intercultural Dialogue Year and the Anthropocene statement reflect quite disparate agendas. While the EU commission (The European Union, 2008) aims at strengthening “respect for the equal dignity of all human beings” (p. 19), and “promoting human rights” (p. 8), the Stratigraphy Commission (2008) argues strongly against human supremacy where human interests are privileged over nonhuman forms for life. In both cases, however, human beings are seen as part of the solution, whether it is to foster peaceful and constructive coexistence through dialogue, or to reduce the harmful impact humans have on the climate. As such, both initiatives signalize a shared belief in human beings’ ability to influence and transform their local and global contexts.

However, in this article I will argue that the two concepts represented in these initiatives also hold the potential for mutual critique, a perspective often overlooked in debates on fostering sustainable intercultural relations in an era of global environmental change (Bergmann, 2020; Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020; Simangan, 2020). In the article, I argue that the Anthropocene narrative offers an opportunity for a critical reevaluation of intercultural dialogue, transcending its traditional anthropocentric focus. Simultaneously, interpreting intercultural dialogue through an Anthropocene lens can contribute to a more nuanced and refined understanding of the Anthropocene itself. Specifically, the idea that intercultural dialogue addresses marginalized voices and aims for equitable power distribution highlights hidden power dynamics within the Anthropocene narrative.

3. Intercultural dialogue and anthropocentrism

The concept of intercultural dialogue has a longstanding history that predates the current discussions on how to address the growing and varied forms of diversity in contemporary multicultural societies (Elias & Mansouri, 2020; Skrefsrud, 2016). In recent years, however, the concept has gained a foothold in Western literature and research, particularly following the significant attention towards intercultural dialogue at the European policy level (Council of Europe, 2008, 2013; The European Union, 2008; UNESCO, 2022). In a context of growing anti-immigration attitudes, a perceived lack of integration of minorities, and increased level of polarization, the Council of Europe (2008) addressed the need for “an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organizations with different cultural backgrounds or world views” (p. 17), urging dialogical initiatives “to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes” (p. 17). Within the context of the European Union, the concept of intercultural dialogue has thus been seen “as one of the main instruments of peace and conflict prevention” (Wilk-Woś, 2010, p. 86) and a significant tool for shaping human society. Hence, at the European policy level, intercultural dialogue serves both as a concept to guide policy construction and as a political instrument to encourage and establish cross-cultural interactions and communication for peaceful human co-existence.

Nevertheless, as noted by scholars such as Jia and Jia (2016), Kinefuchi (2018), and Phipps (2014), there is a pressing need to investigate the concept of intercultural dialogue, exploring both its developmental potential and its limitations and qualifications. One prominent critique has been raised by Phipps (2014), questioning the idealized meaning of intercultural dialogue in contemporary policies. As intercultural dialogue has become a leading term – and even a buzzword – in European policy discussions, Phipps (2014) contends that the concept “is at its best a problematic and largely inoperable under present conditions of globalization” (p. 113). By this, she means that the concept of dialogue is not designed for times of conflict, but rather for “depoliticized and normatively conservative conditions” (Phipps, 2014, p. 122). Within the European policy context, the concept reflects the “post-war aspirations of that the United Nations would function to secure peace between nations through dialogues and negotiations” (Phipps, 2014, p. 114). For that reason, Phipps argues that the concept needs to be reconstructed and adapted to a contemporary

reality of vulnerability, insecurity, and aggression towards humans and their surroundings.

An important part of this critique has been the lack of global awareness within the conceptualizations of intercultural dialogue (see for example Holmes, 2014; Kinefuchi, 2018; Milstein & Castro-Sotomayor, 2020). As the notion of intercultural dialogue is being emptied of content and reduced to a slogan for political enterprise, there is an urgent need for intercultural scholarship to face the anthropocentric forces that have contributed to the current planetary-wide ecological destruction. As argued by Kinefuchi (2018, p. 213), in order to stay relevant, all fields should “continue to be reflexive and adapt to the changes and needs brought about by given historical contingencies”. Hence, according to Kinefuchi (2018), research on intercultural dialogue should critically acknowledge that human activity is influencing the world’s ecosystems to the extent that it appears to be the central driver of environmental change. Conceptualizations of intercultural dialogue should, therefore, extend beyond a narrow focus on anthropocentric concerns, and Earth’s natural landscapes and eco-systems.

Within this background, a central challenge in conceptualizing intercultural dialogue within the Anthropocene is acknowledging the potential tension that may arise, not only between individual freedom and community rights but also between human well-being and environmental concerns, such as the care for animals and other species. Thus, reinterpreting intercultural dialogue within this context suggests a need for action to safeguard the health of the planet and foster peaceful prosperity for all its inhabitants. With this in mind, I now turn to the question of how the Anthropocene narrative can contribute to reshaping intercultural dialogue by integrating critiques of anthropocentrism. What insights can be gained from this critique when reconsidering the concept of intercultural dialogue?

4. Rethinking intercultural dialogue through an Anthropocene lens

A key component of the Anthropocene narrative is the argument for a common moral space to which all organisms and their environments belong (Malm & Hornborg, 2014; Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008). Moving from the Holocene to the Anthropocene era, relations between humans and the environment are no longer dynamic and reciprocal. Rather, human actions, particularly since the onset of industrialization, have greatly affected the environment, frequently in harmful ways. Activities such as pollution, deforestation, and ecological destruction thus

shows a predominantly one-sided and often damaging relationship with nature. As noted by Malm and Hornborg (2014), human beings have ascended to power over the rest of the ecosystem, suppressing plants, animals and other species by distancing humanity from the biosphere. Re-discovering the interconnectedness of all living beings and their ecosystems, would therefore be a way to embrace a shared moral space that acknowledges the intrinsic value of all forms of life.

Consequently, the Anthropocene narrative highlights a profound attentiveness towards voices from the margins, encouraging thinking and practices that give voice to ecological victims of cultural human violence (Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008). Recognizing the transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene is an urge to writing a new common history, making biological species visible, and acknowledging their fight for survival under human destruction. In this sense, interpreting the world around us would involve an incorporation of the experiences of marginalized voices and critically examining the systems and practices that suppress their knowledge, perspectives, and histories. In contexts where the impacts on future biological life processes are largely overlooked, listening to these marginalized voices serves as a reminder of our shared biospheric history, which includes both the oppressors and the oppressed throughout cultural and natural history (see also Bergmann, 2003).

From the perspective of the Anthropocene narrative, nurturing and encouraging such a listening to voices from the margins – also in an ecological sense – will impact all conceptual thinking, including understandings of intercultural dialogue. Because the ecological shift challenges the notion that human beings should be regarded as external to the environments they inhabit (see also Fitzhugh, et al., 2019), the field of intercultural dialogue must broaden its scope beyond exclusively addressing anthropocentric issues. Interpreting the concept of intercultural dialogue in the Anthropocene prompts an inquiry into how dialogical initiatives for sharing and learning across differences can be formed in ways so that they caretake both a sustainable ecological and social development. As noted by Malm and Hornborg (2014, p. 62), “now that humanity is recognized as a geological force”, voices from the margins – also those voices in nature that have been subjected to violence through human beings’ destruction of Earth – should be heard and accounted for in intercultural dialogues. Consequently, rethinking the notion of intercultural dialogue in light of such a perspective, would challenge understandings of the dialogue concept in at least three specific ways.

First, broadening the scope of intercultural dialogue beyond human-centered concerns would encourage the actors who participate in intercultural encounters

to see the interconnections between their everyday lives and the environmental surroundings they share (Simangan, 2020). Intercultural dialogues would thus include attention towards how environmental degradation and climate change disproportionately affect certain communities, particularly those already marginalized. Such a critical awareness could also make intercultural dialogues more practice-oriented, urging participants to act upon their own knowledge, and to not only identify, but also confront mechanisms that maintain the social and cultural inferiorization of minoritized groups. By incorporating environmental concerns, intercultural dialogue becomes a platform for discussing shared ecological responsibilities, fostering a more holistic understanding of coexistence between human cultures, human experiences, nature, and the planet.

Second, the invitation from the Anthropocene narrative to a more inclusive understanding of whose voices are being heard in dialogue, holds the potential of reframing marginal voices in an empowering way. To advocate for a more ethical and interconnected understanding of intercultural dialogue acknowledges the rights of both human and non-human beings. By doing so, marginalized voices are not just perceived as victims of environmental degradation but as critical and constructive contributors to the solutions and narratives of resilience needed in the Anthropocene era. In contrast to what Bhabha (1994) framed as “the colonizer demand for narrative”, where the majority controls the minority by letting their voices be heard, the Anthropocene critique alters the power distribution in such a way that the victim is no longer a victim but an equal participant.

Third, the inclusion of ecological concerns in conceptualizations of intercultural dialogue would also provide audience and resonance for marginalized voices. As Lundy (2007) has emphasized in her prominent model on children’s participation, being given a space to let one’s voice be heard is not enough. Rather, it is through the engagement of an audience that frequently unheard voices can express their unique perspectives, experiences, and challenges. Resonance, in this context, refers to the ability of these voices to emotionally and intellectually connect with an audience, creating an impact that extends beyond the immediacy of their narratives. Lundy (2007) noted that when such voices resonate with an audience, it holds the potential to foster empathy, understanding, and ultimately, social change. Accordingly, by facilitating spaces of resonance, the audience can bear witness to these narratives, validate the experiences, and serve as agents in carrying forward the dialogue initiated by marginalized voices. Cuevas-Parra (2022) emphasized that the incorporation of audience and resonance in the understanding of participation makes it possible

to analyze “the different degrees of participation that can take place in relation to meaningful spaces, negotiation of power, decision-making and shared responsibilities” (p. 365). In a similar vein, by incorporating the Anthropocene critique in intercultural encounters, the resonance of marginalized narratives from all subordinated voices has the power to broaden perspectives, incite introspection, and inspire action.

5. Extending the narrative of the Anthropocene

So far, I have discussed the potential of the Anthropocene narrative for a critical and constructive rethinking of intercultural dialogue. However, as I will show in the following part of the article, a critical incorporation of the Anthropocene narrative into the discourse on intercultural dialogue requires an examination of the Anthropocene narrative itself.

While there is substantial value in the Anthropocene consensus regarding humanity’s exploitation of the planet, Bergmann (2020), Malm and Hornborg (2014), and others have emphasized the need for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the normative ambitions embedded in the Anthropocene narrative. According to Bergmann (2020), such an understanding requires further reflection on how “the all-embracing impact of humans leads to a new humility towards both human and other life forms” (p. 162). Hence, from the perspective of Bergmann, acknowledging humanity’s role in the destruction of the planet is not sufficient. The Anthropocene narrative requires a new humility in recognizing the impact humans have had – and continue to have – on the environment, along with a commitment to reevaluating the relationship with the natural world.

One prominent part of this new humility would be to critically reflect upon the very concepts we use to describe and discuss human-driven destruction of other species and life forms, including the Anthropocene. In this regard, several scholars have problematized the centrality of the ‘anthropos’ in the Anthropocene (Biswas Mellamphy & Vangeest, 2024; Kopnina, 2019). Although the Anthropocene era is defined as a human-dominated geological epoch, a key critique has been the inherent paradox that the concept itself reinforces human superiority. As noted by Biswas Mellamphy and Vangeest (2024), “discussions of the Anthropocene promote humanistic attempts to ‘manage,’ ‘engineer,’ or ‘guide’ the geological timescale, with humans ‘optimizing’ climate change toward ‘sustainable ends’” (p. 601). Hence, Biswas Mellamphy and Vangeest (2024) critique how mainstream discussions of the Anthropocene – such as those found

in policy documents, climate reports, and certain scientific discourses, particularly in fields like geoengineering, climate modeling, and Earth system science – often frame humans as the central agents of control over environmental and geological processes. Discourses surrounding the Anthropocene assumes that humans have the capability – and even the obligation – to control and govern the planet’s geological and ecological future. According to Biswas Mellamphy and Vangeest (2024), this reflects a continuation of anthropocentrism, where human intervention is seen as the primary solution to environmental crises. As such, anthropocentrism, either in a strong or weaker sense, remains an important part of the standard and dominant narrative of the Anthropocene.

Furthermore, such an inherent anthropocentrism runs the risk of treating climate change as a problem that can be technologically fixed rather than questioning the underlying political, economic, and ethical structures that caused environmental destruction in the first place. The critique from Bergmann (2020), Biswas Mellamphy and Vangeest (2024) and others, suggests that we need to move beyond the idea that humans should engineer the planet toward sustainable ends. Instead, they invite a more ecologically and ethically grounded approach – one that questions the underlying assumptions of human dominance and acknowledges the agency of non-human life, ecosystems, and planetary processes.

Such an invitation includes acknowledging that “the majority of the planet’s poor are suffering from the violence of ongoing climatic change caused by a minority of countries” (Bergmann, 2020, p. 164). As such, we see a call for a critical reflection that moves beyond merely recognizing and critiquing anthropocentric superiority. Seeking a more nuanced and complex perspective challenges us to reconsider how the Anthropocene narrative may create blind spots, obscuring the structural inequalities and power imbalances that shape environmental crises.

6. Rethinking the Anthropocene through an intercultural dialogue lens

From this perspective, I believe that embracing an ecologically grounded conceptualization of intercultural dialogue has the potential to address and expose the global power imbalances that the Anthropocene narrative may overlook or even reinforce. In the following and final section of this article, I identify three interrelated perspectives on how an eco-friendly intercultural dialogue can critically challenge dominant Anthropocene assumptions and offer alternative ways of understanding human-environment relationships.

First, as noted above, the Anthropocene concept is often critiqued for reinforcing anthropocentrism – the idea that humans are the central and most significant actors in shaping the planet. Paradoxically, and contrary to what was the original idea when members of the Stratigraphy Commission of the Geological Society (Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008) reintroduced the Anthropocene term, this perspective tends to frame environmental issues in terms of human needs, economic systems, and technological solutions while sidelining the intrinsic value and agency of non-human life. Within this context, a revised concept of intercultural dialogue provides a space to challenge these assumptions by integrating diverse worldviews that see humans as part of, rather than above, nature.

Second, as I identified above, a major issue with the Anthropocene narrative has been that it often promotes a technocratic and market-driven solution to the environmental crisis. Many dominant responses to the Anthropocene rely on technocratic fixes, such as geoengineering, carbon markets, or AI-driven sustainability efforts. Hence, this approach to the Anthropocene assumes that humans can control, manage, or ‘fix’ planetary systems through scientific innovation, economic incentives, and large-scale interventions, often ignoring deeper ethical, cultural, and ecological considerations. While these solutions may seem promising, they often fail to address the root causes of ecological crises, such as overconsumption, extractivism, and global inequalities. Thus, an eco-friendly intercultural dialogue raises several critical concerns about this technocratic mindset, for example the idea that humans can control complex ecosystems. However, history shows that large-scale engineering projects (e.g., industrial agriculture, dams, etc) frequently create new environmental problems rather than solving them. Many technological solutions also focus on quick fixes rather than deep, systemic changes. For example, many carbon capture technologies reduce emissions in the short term but fail to challenge the overconsumption and economic structures that drive climate change. Moreover, while market-driven solutions often shift responsibility away from large-scale polluters and onto individuals or marginalized communities, an eco-friendly intercultural dialogue exposes their limitations and ethical problems. As such, a revised concept of intercultural dialogue can challenge the Anthropocene’s technocratic and economic focus, shifting the conversation toward ethical, relational, and ecologically sustainable ways of living. Rather than seeking to optimize the planet for human convenience, an eco-friendly intercultural dialogue reframes sustainability as a collective, ethical responsibility that includes both human and non-human life.

Third, by fostering attentiveness to a broader spectrum of voices – including the marginalized voices of plants, animals, and other species – an ecologically oriented intercultural dialogue reminds us that some actors are more at risk than others when striving to cultivate a socially just and responsible global community. In their critique of the Anthropocene narrative, Malm and Hornborg (2014) underscored that the Anthropocene often fails to highlight global inequalities in environmental impacts and responsibilities, overlooking the divide between how the Global North and Global South contribute to and suffer from ecological degradation. Industrialized nations have historically been the largest polluters and resource consumers, while the Global South bears the brunt of the environmental fallout, including rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and biodiversity loss. In this context, an ecologically oriented intercultural dialogue can inspire critical awareness of the historical and ongoing exploitation of land and resources in colonized or developing regions and how this inequalities shape both environmental and cultural realities.

7. Concluding remarks

The purpose of this article has been to discuss and explore a reinterpretation of intercultural dialogue in the Anthropocene. By using the term *in*, I have aimed to signalize that intercultural dialogue initiatives are not situated outside the critical discourse on humans' dominant influence on the planet. Rather, as a human activity, intercultural dialogues take place *within* the Anthropocene and, as such, should be subject to critical restructuring amid the ongoing anthropogenic transformations of the Earth's atmosphere and ecosystems (see also Bergmann, 2020).

My argument has been that both the concept of intercultural dialogue and the Anthropocene narrative can mutually enrich one another when critically reflecting on what it means to foster peaceful, constructive, and sustainable coexistence in a changing world. At a time when global power struggles disrupt traditional peace efforts, misinformation and identity politics deepen divisions, and public trust in institutions is eroding, rethinking intercultural dialogue is more urgent than ever (Kinefuchi, 2018; UNESCO, 2022). Sustainability cannot be separated from these broader crises, as climate action, resource equity, and ecological justice are deeply intertwined with political instability, cultural tensions, and institutional distrust. Learning from the Anthropocene narrative – particularly its emphasis on recognizing the voices of nature when acknowledging the ecological destruction caused by human impact – intercultural dialogue can

more effectively address the recurring critique of anthropocentrism. In doing so, intercultural dialogue can better serve as a transformative force, helping to bridge divides and cultivate trust in the pursuit of a more just and sustainable future.

Furthermore, although the Anthropocene narrative has fundamentally reshaped how we understand human-environment relationships, it also carries a set of problematic assumptions that demand critical reflection. While it is undeniable that human activity has led to significant ecological disruptions, the framing of the Anthropocene often reinforces a hierarchy in which humans are positioned as managers, engineers, or even saviors of the planet. This perspective risks sidelining the intrinsic value and agency of non-human life while also overlooking global power inequalities. Although discussions about climate change and environmental degradation within the Anthropocene framework often focus on humanity as a collective, the reality is that environmental destruction has been disproportionately driven by industrialized nations and corporate interests, while marginalized communities – particularly in the Global South – bear the consequences. As such, an eco-friendly intercultural dialogue can challenge the Anthropocene's anthropocentric, technocratic, and market-driven biases by acknowledging the specific actors, histories, and structures that have fueled – and continue to fuel – ecological crises, rather than treating humanity as a homogenous force. By recognizing the rights, agency, and intrinsic worth of ecosystems, animals, and other non-human actors, intercultural dialogue brings to the forefront the voices of those who have historically been silenced or excluded from environmental decision-making.

There is significant value in fostering a broader conversation around the Anthropocene. When disciplines beyond the natural sciences engage with the Anthropocene narrative, its relevance and practical implications can be further theorized and translated into actionable insights. For intercultural dialogue, such engagement situates what Simangan (2020) describes as “narratives of vulnerability and historical injustice, the non-modernist understanding of nature, [and] the agency of the vulnerable” (p. 211) within the Anthropocene discourse. By amplifying these perspectives, intercultural dialogue can expand and diversify discussions on the Anthropocene, reinforcing its significance in this new geological era. At the same time, embedding the concept of intercultural dialogue within the Anthropocene framework strengthens the recognition of ecology as an inseparable context for human interaction and communication. In doing so, intercultural dialogue challenges us to move beyond narratives that depict human cultures as distinct from – or superior to – the natural world.

References

- Bergmann, S. (2003). *God in context. A survey of contextual theology*. Ashgate.
- Bergmann, S. (2020). Theology in the Anthropocene – and beyond. In S. Bergmann & M. Vähäkangas (Eds.), *Contextual Theology: Skills and Practices of Liberating Faith* (pp. 160-180). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429348006>
- Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Biswas Mellamphy, N., & Vangeest, J. (2024). Human, all too human? Anthropocene narratives, posthumanisms, and the problem of “post-anthropocentrism”. *The Anthropocene Review*, 11(3), 599–613. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20530196241237249>
- Council of Europe. (2008). *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Council of Europe. (2013). *Strasbourg Dialogues*. Retrieved 22.12.2023, from <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/strasbourg-dialogues>
- Cuevas-Parra, P. (2022). Multi-dimensional lens to article 12 of the UNCRC: a model to enhance children’s participation. *Children’s Geographies*, 21(3), 363–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2022.2071598>
- Elias, A., & Mansouri, F. (2020). A Systematic Review of Studies on Interculturalism and Intercultural Dialogue. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 41(4), 490-523. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2020.1782861>
- Fitzhugh, B., Butler, V. L., Bovy, K. M. & Etnier, M. A. (2019). Human ecodynamics: A perspective for the study of long-term change in socioecological systems. *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, 23, 1077-1094. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jasrep.2018.03.016>
- Holmes, P. (2014). Intercultural dialogue: challenges to theory, practice and research. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.866120>
- Liana, C. & Fair, H. (2019). Anthropocene. In F. Stein (Ed.), *The Open Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. <http://doi.org/10.29164/19anthro>
- Jia, Y. & Jia, X. (2016). The anthropocosmic perspective on intercultural communication: Learning to be global citizens is learning to be human. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, 25(1), 32–52.
- Kinefuchi, E. (2018). Critical Discourse Analysis and the ecological turn in intercultural communication. *Review of Communication*, 18(2), 212–230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15358593.2018.1479882>
- Kopnina H (2019) Anthropocentrism and post-humanism. In H. Callan (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (pp. 1-8). Wiley.

- Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal* 33(6), 927–942.
- Malm, A. & Hornborg, A. (2014). The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative. *The Anthropocene Review*, 1(1), 62–69.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019613516>
- Milstein, T. & Castro-Sotomayor, J. (2020). (Eds.). *Routledge Handbook of Ecocultural Identity*. Routledge.
- Phipps, A. (2014). 'They are bombing now': 'Intercultural Dialogue' in times of conflict. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 14(1), 108–124.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.866127>
- Simangan, D. (2020). Where is the Anthropocene? IR in a new geological epoch. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 211–224. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz248>
- Skrefsrud, T.-A. (2016). *The intercultural dialogue: preparing teachers for diversity*. Waxmann.
- The European Union. (2008). *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue (2008)*. The European Union. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/summary/european-year-of-intercultural-dialogue-2008.html>
- UNESCO. (2022). *We need to talk: measuring intercultural dialogue for peace and inclusion*. UNESCO.
- Wilk-Woś, Z. (2010). The role of intercultural dialogue in the EU policy. *Journal of Intercultural Management*, 2(1), 78–88.
- Zalasiewicz, J. et al. (2008). Are we now living in the Anthropocene? *GSA Today*, 18(2), 4–8. DOI: 10.1130/GSAT01802A.1

Authors

Thor-André Skreftsrud

University of Inland Norway

thor.skreftsrud@inn.no

Funds

This work received no funds.

Competing Interests

The author hereby states that there are no financial and non-financial competing interests.

Citation

Skreftsrud T.-A. (2025). Reinterpreting intercultural dialogue for sustainability in the Anthropocene era. *Visions for Sustainability*, 23, 11856, 277-292.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.13135/2384-8677/11856>



© 2025 Skreftsrud

This is an open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).